

Voices  
from the  
GapsAimee E.  
Liu

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*Many of my readers and friends have expressed amazement that I could have exposed such a personal side of my life as I did in Solitaire. Their reaction amazed me. The notion that I am so special, so precious that I must not open myself up for scrutiny irks me. We are all the same animal, we human beings. We all share the same feelings, appetites, needs. We differ in our modes of expression, in the traps we create for ourselves and the escape mechanisms we use to free ourselves, but basically we understand each other, or can when we learn the common language.*

— Sidelights

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## Biography

Aimee E. Liu, the daughter of Maurice and Jane Liu, was born on April 19, 1953. Born in Connecticut, Liu grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood. Although she defines herself as “an American who grew up in a very Caucasian setting,” she also addresses the issue of growing up with mixed ancestry as feeling like an “oddball who couldn’t fit in.” Before starting her career as a writer, Liu attended Yale University, and has worked as a fashion model, flight attendant and associate producer of NBC’s Today Show. She admires the works of Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston, Truman Capote, Pat Conroy and Wallace Stegner. She currently resides in Los Angeles, California with her husband, Martin Fink and their two sons.

### Quick Facts

- \* Born in 1953
- \* Chinese-American novelist, memoirist, and self-help book writer

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# Aimee E. Liu

## Biography continued

At the age of 23, Liu wrote her first book, which was a memoir. *Solitaire* is the narrative of Liu's own affliction with and recovery from anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder that usually strikes young middle- to upper-class women between the ages of thirteen and thirty. Liu suffered from anorexia for eight years, beginning at age thirteen and continuing until she was twenty-one. She attributes writing this book to pulling her out of the final stages of anorexia. With the encouragement from her agent, she turned her energy to magazine editing and co-authoring nonfiction self-help books for the next ten years, which include such works as: *False Love and Other Romantic Illusions* and *Success Trap*.

With the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, Liu was prompted to write her first novel, *Face* (Warner 1994). Like Maibelle Chung, the heroine of the novel, Liu is one-quarter Chinese and did not closely examine her Chinese heritage until later in life. *Face* describes Maibelle as a part-American, part-Chinese woman who comes to terms with her heritage. The novel's central themes consist of biracial identity and intermarriage between Chinese and Caucasians, issues Liu is familiar with first-hand. Liu addresses the issues many biracial children face: feelings of inadequacy, being an outsider in your own community and a loss of one's heritage.

Touching on similar territory, Liu's second novel, *Cloud Mountain*, is also about an interracial marriage. She incorporates the story of her grandmother, Jennie Ella Trescott from Fort Dodge, Kansas, and her grandfather, Liu Ch'eng-yu from Canton, China, into a fictional novel that is "approximately 70% true." She also includes poems from her grandfather's *Reminiscences*, published in 1946.



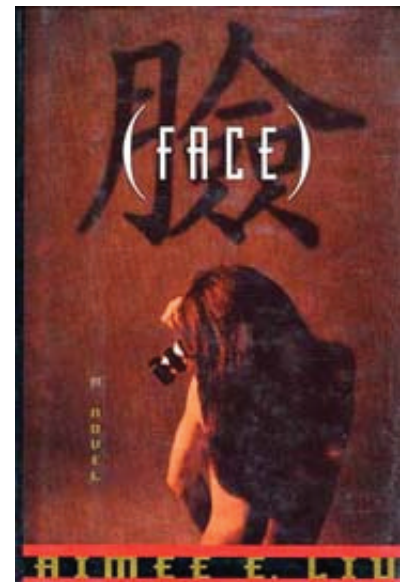
# Aimee E. Liu

## Biography continued

In *Cloud Mountain*, the two central characters Hope and Liang Po-yu wed during a time when anti-miscegenation laws were the norm. After receiving racist threats and experiencing prejudice in California, where it was a crime for people of different races to touch in public, Hope and Liang move to China. With most of the novel focused in Shanghai, Liu composes concrete examples of how their status as an interracial couple determines how others treat them, regardless of their level of education, political power (Liang was a political leader assisting in Dr. Sun Yat Sen's revolutionary plans) or class status.

In China, Hope finds the same prejudice against intermarriages as she found in the United States. With her husband away fighting in China's revolution most of the time, Hope faces loneliness, boredom, hate, murder, illness, childbirth, death, rape, starvation, fear of homelessness and war. The character reflects Liu's attempt to capture her grandmother's experiences in her fiction. In reference to her grandmother, Liu states, "I have tried to understand that courage. She was a suffragette, she was somewhat rebellious, and she was willing to cross a dangerous boundary."

Although both *Face* and *Cloud Mountain* were about the hardships and prejudice many American-Asians must confront, Liu believes Asian writers must not limit themselves to Asian themes. Her next book will be about raising her two sons with California as a backdrop.





# Aimee E. Liu

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